

Small Black Box, 29 August 2003, Phuqelica / Rene Wooller / Toy Satellite

Working backwards...

Andrew Garton concluded the night, conducting a symphony of GPS data through midi devices along with pre-defined video and violinist accompaniment. It is nice to see someone else working in the realm of situationist ideas but there is plenty to criticise in his methods. The overall sound seemed rather thin focused primarily on mid to high-band frequencies. The SBB environment seems well sorted for BASS so it may not be so much Andrew's fault however I thought the integration with the violinist could have been achieved more effectively. I'm not sure whether any of Justina Curtis' violin was processed but it seemed to primarily consist of random jagged noises which were occasionally successful in breaking up the twee sawtooths and squares. The video was interesting to watch with many layers of site-specific footage, installation work and the flashing up of slogans which...hang on a minute? Didn't U2 do that?!?! I think Toy Satellite provided the most balanced set overall; unchallenging but Andrew is exploring interesting territory and I will still return with interest to check his results.

What makes experimental music? At what point do you say..."Nah mate...that's techno!" I pondered this whilst witnessing Rene Wooller's set, which sonically transported me to the sounds of early 90's Orbital. Rene is working on an experimental piece of software (don't ask me what it does - perhaps he should have demonstrated) and seemed to be having some difficulty. Strange though it may seem, I thought the most interesting sounds came from his midi-controller issues; like a child making a dam with his foot in a drain, the midi notes would choke up and then fire in a raging torrent. Partially successful, I think Rene could have lost the video which was repetitive, pointless and annoying (how often do we need to see someone swallow a bug?)

As the host of Audiopollen (Wed nights 11pm - 4ZZZ - haha - quick plug!) I am in the position of encouraging developing artists. I think that there is a LOT of talent out there and places like Small Black Box are perfect for nurturing that talent. Talent however is not something that is just given. From Phuqelica's bio it seems to me that they don't care whether anyone likes them or not. Well that's fine - I don't! As my esteemed colleague Joe Musgrove once said "People shouldn't be worried about not be any good when they start - that's why it is called starting". I do think it is important that they WANT to start and not that they are doing it because they have to for some kind of university assessment. With the gear provided they had the makings of an interesting set - laptop, chaos pad type effects and electronic drums. Directionless Improv music is one thing - but couple this with a vibe of general apathy and inability to do anything more than nauseatingly replay tired vocal samples, fiddle about and drum along sloppily; makes me wonder why the hell they are in the spotlight when staring at the bored fish-like audience is more interesting. Hey, I think I just answered my question. I'm going to go out of my way to discourage them from ever attempting to do anything "weird" and "experimental" ever again.

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